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STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION
IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS
MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
SINCE THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of Thailand

Paper submitted by Thailand**

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1. The present report covers the period since the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names took place in Montreal, Canada, from 18 to 31 August 1987.

National Committee on Geographical Names

2. The Royal Thai Survey Department is now in the process of establishing a National Committee on Geographical Names which will act as the national names authority of Thailand. It is hoped that the Committee will be approved and established before the Sixth Conference is held. Membership will consist of 21 members from various governmental departments and offices, i.e. representatives of the ministries of the Interior, Education, Foreign Affairs, Communication, University Affairs, and of the Royal Thai Survey, Hydrography, Land, Royal Irrigation, Land Development, Local Administration and Royal Forestry departments, as well as representatives from the Royal Institute, the National Library, the Thai Geographical Gazetteer Committee and other scholars. The Committee is intended to implement particularly resolution 4, recommendation A, of the first United Nations Conference, and resolution 15 of the Fifth United Nations Conference, both on national standardization.

Romanization of geographical names

3. Standardization and romanization of geographical names in Thailand is the responsibility of the Royal Institute, which has a special committee to determine proper Thai spelling and its romanization in accordance with the official transcription rules. The transcription of Thai geographical names into Roman characters is intended to enable foreigners to pronounce the names as closely as possible to the Thai sound. These rules of transcription were adopted as the international system for the romanization of Thai geographical names at the first Conference in 1967.

4. The Royal Institute has been aware that the need for romanized transcription of Thai is increasing, not only to enable people from abroad to read geographical and proper names but also for international interchange of data by electrical devices where accuracy is preferred over pronunciation. The above-mentioned romanized transcription of Thai, which is oriented to pronunciation, is not convenient because it cannot be converted back into the original Thai. This is because one Roman character represents several Thai vowels or consonants: that is, there are fewer Roman characters than are called for in Thai script. Therefore the Royal Institute decided to have the rules improved and made more practical. On 24 December 1985, the Thai Romanization Improvement Committee was appointed to undertake this task and to set up a standardized system of romanized transliteration and transcription of Thai. These efforts finally resulted in two separate systems, the romanized transliteration, and the romanized transcription. The first one is a means of converting Thai writing into the Roman alphabet; it is a two-way conversion system which ignores pronunciation. The second one assures that a Thai word, converted into the Roman alphabet, is represented with the correct

pronunciation. This new romanized transcription has been elaborated to solve certain ambiguities caused by the use of the same Roman character for more than one Thai sound, especially vowel sounds.

Thai Geographical Names Gazetteer

5. The six volumes of the Royal Institute's Thai Geographical Names Gazetteer were published during 1982-1986. Since that time, geographical names and place-names have been changed and have increased in number: therefore the Thai Geographical Names Gazetteer Committee, in 1989, prepared and commenced a revision of these volumes. At present, the work has progressed to the revision of the fourth volume.

6. The Royal Thai Survey Department has prepared the National Gazetteer based on the topographic or base map of Thailand, series L 7017, scale 1:50,000. The compilation of names from 830 topographic map sheets has already been completed. This work will form the National Geographical Names Database, which in the process of computerization will be called the Geographical Name Information System. The geographical names derived from the said maps of the country will be published as the National Gazetteer when they have been completely edited.

7. The Royal Thai Survey Department has also planned to work on the "Toponymic guidelines". It is hoped that this work will be accomplished and printed in the near future.

Bilingual list of names of countries

8. The Thai Geographical Names Gazetteer Committee of the Royal Institute prepares and revises a bilingual "List of country names" in English and Thai from time to time. The new list of country names has already been completed and submitted to the Government to approve for public use, and it will be published before the Sixth Conference is held.

9. Besides country names, the Committee has also prepared a bilingual "List of territories, islands and archipelagoes".

Other matters

10. Thailand sent a delegation to participate in both the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names held in 1989 and 1991, respectively, at Geneva.

11. Thailand convened the fourth meeting of the Asia, South-East, and Pacific, South-West Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, held at Krung Thep Maha Nakhon (Bangkok) during 12-14 September 1988.

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12. Thailand also sent the delegation to participate in the fifth meeting of the Division held at Perth, Australia, from 27 to 29 August 1990.

13. Thailand plans to send two delegates to attend the sixth meeting of the Division to be held at Wellington, New Zealand, 29-30 September 1992.
